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**POINT PAPER FOR THE F-15**

Why We Cannot Delay A Decision

-- The Saudi Government strongly feels it must have a decision now;

-- The Saudis have been talking to us since May 1973 about a replacement for the Lightning interceptor;

-- In November 1974, following a DOD study of Saudi defense requirements earlier that year, we agreed in principle to provide an advanced fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia;

-- The commitment to provide the F-15 is part of a long-established uninterrupted pattern of support for Saudi Arabia's security;

-- The Saudis must provide for adequate air defense in the 1980s;

-- Their Lightning interceptors will be grounded due to age by the early 1980s;

-- The Saudis have made it clear that while their strong preference is the F-15, they will have no choice but to turn to other suppliers if we cannot give them an affirmative decision now. Delay will be tantamount to refusal.

Saudi Defense Needs

-- With a very large country, with a small population and vast wealth, Saudi Arabia has a requirement for modern defensive equipment;

-- Like Israel, it must have quality in its weapons systems to offset its quantitative defense limitati[illegible]

-- For the past two decades, Saudi Arabia has been under pressure from radical Arab regimes;

-- Iraq and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, both armed by the Soviet Union, remain substantial threats to Saudi Arabia;

-- The Saudis also see extensive Soviet involvement in Ethiopia and thus see themselves on three sides surrounded by radical regimes heavily armed by the Soviet Union;

-- 60 F-15s will provide Saudi Arabia with an appropriate deterrent against air attack and a means of meeting such an attack should it occur;

-- Since 1974 Iraq has quadrupled its essentially Soviet supplied inventory of combat aircraft and it now has around 400 such aircraft;

-- In 1983, Iraq will have a slightly larger total number of combat aircraft, but double the number of advanced fighters -- some 200 of them. If the F-15 sale is approved, Saudi Arabia will then have 170 combat aircraft -- less than half Iraq's total -- and 60 advanced fighters -- less than 1/3 Iraq's total;

-- The Saudi request is limited to 60 aircraft primarily because of manpower limitations in providing trained pilots and maintenance personnel. Sixty F-15s will provide Saudi Arabia with a maximum of three squadrons, including 15 training

aircraft. These aircraft will be thinly stretched to provide air defense for the eastern oil fields, the southern region where Saudis in the past have been attacked from the air by Egyptians and South Yemenis, and the central region which includes Jidda and Riyadh.

Intended Use - Threat to Israel

-- The Saudi Government has assured us it has no aggressive intentions against any state and that it will use the F-15 only for national defense;

-- It would be folly for the Saudis to employ the F-15s offensively against neighboring countries, leaving Saudi Arabia open to retaliatory attack;

-- The Saudi armed forces are organized for defensive operations. They would not use their prime air defense asset in offensive operations;

-- The Saudis have made it very clear their dedication to achieving peace in the Middle East long before the first F-15 is delivered to them.

Offensive/Defensive Capability

-- The Saudis want the F-15 precisely because it is the best defensive aircraft for their needs, not for its limited air-to-ground capability;

-- Same configuration as approved for the USAF;

-- Can carry maximum of three 2000-pound bombs, less if external fuel tanks are carried, because bombs and fuel tanks are suspended from the same pylons--which cannot be removed;

-- The aircraft has been developed to emphasize air-to-air capability, and thus will carry less than half the bomb load the manufacturer originally specified for a multi-purpose role;

-- Sale to Saudi Arabia does not include conformal fuel tanks which would increase its range;

-- The USAF has not certified Multiple Ejection Racks; the Saudis have not requested them;

-- We have no plans to sell Saudi Arabia MERs or any other devices that would increase the range or combat capability of the F-15;

-- Building racks for a high performance aircraft like the F-15 that will eject bombs safely presents great technical difficulties;

-- No third country could even begin to build the racks for the Saudis without extensive testing of the F-15 itself and this would require our authorization.

Unauthorized Use

-- Senior Saudi officials have assured us they intend to adhere scrupulously to the terms of the sales contract prohibiting unauthorized transfer to or training of third parties.

Tabuk

-- Saudis will not station F-15s at Tabuk;

-- Would place primary Saudi air defense weapon in jeopardy;

-- Present facilities at Tabuk cannot accommodate the F-15s; U.S. assistance would be required to upgrade the base.

Americans in Combat

-- Pursuant to the 1976 Arms Export Control Act, the U.S. would not allow persons employed under Foreign Military Sales contracts in Saudi Arabia or in any other country to perform services which would support combat operations.

Additional Aircraft

-- On the basis of conversations with senior Saudi officials we are persuaded Saudi Arabia has no plans to acquire any combat aircraft over and above the proposed 60 F-15s and the 107 F-5s already in the Saudi inventory;

-- Saudi manpower limitations constrain their ability to absorb additional aircraft;

-- If any of the three countries should acquire or contract to purchase additional combat aircraft from another country, the U.S. will carefully reassess the regional military balance;

-- Under standard Foreign Military Sales controls the U.S. retains the right to suspend or cancel sales when such action is required in the national interest by unusual and compelling circumstances.

Physical Security

-- Saudi Arabia's past record in protecting classified equipment and data is excellent;

-- Saudi Arabia has no relations with any Communist country, nor are Communist nationals permitted to enter Saudi Arabia;

-- The U.S. will, however, prior to the delivery of the F-15, ensure that the F-15 and its classified data are adequately protected.

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